

THE CONQUEST OF QUEBEC.

THE taking of Quebec was one of the most remarkable achievements of the British arms on the American Continent,—and also figures as one of the most curious exploits of modern warfare in any country; and therefore might well claim, on its own account, to be noticed in our miscellany of historiettes. But it presents itself with peculiar interest, and becomes entirely appropriate to the purpose of our Scottish Tales, on account of the conspicuous part which the Fraser Highlanders acted in it,—furnishing a fine specimen

of the style in which Scottish soldiers have acquitted themselves in America.

Fraser's Highlanders, or the 78th regiment, were embodied on behalf of the British government in 1757, by the Hon. Simon Fraser, son of the Jacobite Lord Lovat; and though he possessed not an inch of land, and had in his youth ranked as a rebel against the power which he now served, yet, from the mere influence of clanship, he raised in a few weeks a corps of 800 men from among the families of his own name; and to these were added upwards of 600 of others who were raised by his friends and officers. The uniform of the regiment "was the full Highland dress, with musket and broadsword, to which many of the soldiers added the dirk at their own expense, and a purse of badger's or otter's skin. The bonnet was raised or cocked on one side, with a slight bend inclining down to the right ear, over which were suspended two or more black feathers. Eagles' or hawks' feathers were usually worn by the gentlemen, in the Highlands, while the bonnets of the common people were ornamented with a bunch of the distinguishing mark of the clan or district. The ostrich feather in the bonnets of the soldiers was a modern addition of that period, as the present load of plumage on the bonnet is a still more recent introduction, forming, however, in hot climates, an excellent defence against a vertical sun." The regiment embarked in company with Montgomery's Highlanders at Greenock, and landed at Halifax in June 1757. They were intended to be employed in an expedition against Louisbourg; which, however, after the necessary preparations, was abandoned. About this time it was proposed to change the uniform of the regiment, as the Highland garb was judged unfit for the severe winters and the hot summers of North America; but the officers and soldiers having set themselves in opposition to the plan, and being warmly supported by Colonel Fraser, who represented to the commander-in-chief the bad consequences that might

follow if it were persisted in, the plan was relinquished. "Thanks to our gracious chief," said a veteran of the regiment, "we were allowed to wear the garb of our fathers, and, in the course of six winters, showed the doctors that they did not understand our constitution; for, in the coldest winters, our men were more healthy than those regiments who wore breeches and warm clothing."

In consequence of the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the several nations of Indians between the Appalachian mountains and the Lakes, in October, 1759, the British government was enabled to carry into effect those operations which had been projected against the French settlements in Canada, and the most important by far of these was the enterprise against Quebec. According to the plan fixed upon for the conquest of Canada, Major-general Wolfe, who had given promise of great military talents at Louisbourg, was to proceed up the river St. Lawrence and attack Quebec, whilst General Amherst, after reducing Ticonderoga and Crown Point, was to descend the St. Lawrence and cooperate with General Wolfe in the conquest of Quebec. Yet the force under General Wolfe did not exceed 7,000 effective men, whilst that under General Amherst amounted to more than twice that number; but the commander-in-chief seems to have calculated upon a junction with General Wolfe in sufficient time for the siege of Quebec. The forces under General Wolfe comprehended the following regiments,—15th, 28th, 35th, 43d, 47th, 48th, 58th, Fraser's Highlanders, the Rangers, and the grenadiers of Louisbourg.

The fleet, under the command of Admirals Saunders and Holmes, with the transports, proceeded up the St. Lawrence, and reached the island of Orleans, a little below Quebec, in the end of June, where the troops were disembarked without opposition. The Marquis de Montcalm, who commanded the French troops, which were greatly superior in number to the invaders, resolved rather to depend upon the natural

strength of his position than his numbers, and took his measures accordingly. The city of Quebec was tolerably well fortified, defended by a numerous garrison, and abundantly supplied with provisions and ammunition. This able and hitherto fortunate leader had reinforced the troops of the colony with five regular battalions, formed of the best of the inhabitants; and he had, besides, completely disciplined all the Canadians of the neighbourhood capable of bearing arms, and several tribes of Indians. He had posted his army on a piece of ground along the shore of Beaufort, from the river St. Charles to the falls of Montmorency,—a position rendered strong by precipices, woods, and rivers, and defended by intrenchments where the ground appeared the weakest. To undertake the siege of Quebec under the disadvantages which presented themselves, seemed a rash enterprise; but, although General Wolfe was completely aware of these difficulties, a thirst for glory, and the workings of a vigorous mind, which set every obstacle at defiance, impelled him to make the hazardous attempt. His maxim was, that a “brave and victorious army finds no difficulties;” and he was anxious to verify the truth of the adage in the present instance.

Having ascertained that, to reduce the place, it was necessary to erect batteries on the north of the St. Lawrence, the British general endeavoured, by a series of manœuvres, to draw Montcalm from his position; but the French commander was too prudent to risk a battle. With the view of attacking the enemy’s intrenchments, General Wolfe sent a small armament up the river above the city; and, having personally surveyed the banks on the side of the enemy from one of the ships, he resolved to cross the river Montmorency and make the attack. He therefore ordered six companies of grenadiers and part of the Royal Americans to cross the river and land near the mouth of the Montmorency, and at the same time directed the two brigades commanded by Generals Murray and Townshend to pass a ford higher up. Close to the

water's edge there was a detached redoubt, which the grenadiers were ordered to attack, in the expectation that the enemy would descend from the hill in its defence, and thus bring on a general engagement. At all events, the possession of this post was of importance, as from it the British commander could obtain a better view of the enemy's intrenchments than he had yet been able to accomplish. The grenadiers and Royal Americans were the first who landed. They had received orders to form in four distinct bodies, but not to begin the attack till the first brigade should have passed the ford, and be near enough to support them. No attention, however, was paid to these instructions. Before even the first brigade had crossed, the grenadiers, before they were regularly formed, rushed forward with impetuosity and considerable confusion to attack the enemy's intrenchments. They were received with a well-directed fire, which effectually checked them and threw them into disorder. They endeavoured to form under the redoubt, but being unable to rally, they retreated and formed behind the first brigade, which had by this time landed, and was drawn up on the beach in good order. The plan of attack being thus totally disconcerted, General Wolfe repassed the river and returned to the isle of Orleans. In this unfortunate attempt the British lost 543 of all ranks killed, wounded, and missing. Of the Highlanders, up to the second of September, the loss was 18 rank and file killed, and 6 officers, and 85 rank and file wounded. In the general orders which were issued the following morning, General Wolfe complained bitterly of the conduct of the grenadiers: "The check which the grenadiers met with yesterday will, it is hoped, be a lesson to them for the time to come. Such impetuous, irregular, and unsoldier-like proceedings, destroy all order, make it impossible for the commanders to form any disposition for attack, and put it out of the general's power to execute his plan. The grenadiers could not suppose that they alone could beat the

French army; and therefore it was necessary that the corps under Brigadiers Monckton and Townshend should have time to join, that the attack might be general. The very first fire of the enemy was sufficient to repulse men who had lost all sense of order and military discipline. Amherst's and the Highlanders alone, by the soldier-like and cool manner they were formed in, would undoubtedly have beaten back the whole Canadian army if they had ventured to attack them."

General Wolfe now changed his plan of operations. Leaving his position at Montmorency, he re-embarked his troops and artillery, and landed at Point Levi, whence he passed up the river in transports; but finding no opportunity of annoying the enemy above the town, he resolved to convey his troops farther down, in boats, and land them by night within a league of Cape Diamond, with a view of ascending the heights of Abraham,—which rise abruptly, with steep ascent, from the banks of the river,—and thus gain possession of the ground on the back of the city, where the fortifications were less strong. A plan more replete with dangers and difficulties could scarcely have been devised; but, from the advanced period of the season, it was necessary either to abandon the enterprise altogether, or to make an attempt upon the city, whatever might be the result. The troops, notwithstanding the recent disaster, were in high spirits, and ready to follow their general wherever he might lead them. The commander, on the other hand, though afflicted with a severe dysentery and fever, which had debilitated his frame, resolved to avail himself of the readiness of his men, and to conduct the hazardous enterprise in which they were about to engage in person.

In order to deceive the enemy, Admiral Holmes was directed to move farther up the river on the 12th of September, but to sail down in the night time, so as to protect the landing of the forces. These orders were punctually obeyed.

About an hour after midnight of the same day four regiments, the light infantry, with the Highlanders and grenadiers, were embarked in flat-bottomed boats, under the command of Brigadiers Monckton and Murray. They were accompanied by General Wolfe, who was among the first that landed. The boats fell down with the tide, keeping close to the north shore in the best order; but, owing to the rapidity of the current, and the darkness of the night, most of the boats landed a little below the intended place of disembarkation. "The French," says Smollett, "had posted sentries along shore to challenge boats and vessels, and give the alarm occasionally. The first boat that contained the English troops being questioned accordingly, a captain of Fraser's regiment, who had served in Holland, and who was perfectly well acquainted with the French language and customs, answered without hesitation to *Qui vive?*—which is their challenging word,—*la France*; nor was he at a loss to answer the second question, which was much more particular and difficult. When the sentinel demanded, *a quel regiment?* the captain replied, *de la reine*, which he knew, by accident, to be one of those that composed the body commanded by Bougainville. The soldier took it for granted this was the expected convoy, (a convoy of provisions expected that night for the garrison of Quebec,) and, saying *passé*, allowed all the boats to proceed without further question. In the same manner the other sentries were deceived; though one, more wary than the rest, came running down to the water's edge, and called, *Pour quoi est ce qui vous ne parlez pas haut?* 'Why don't you speak with an audible voice?' To this interrogation, which implied doubt, the captain answered with admirable presence of mind, in a soft tone of voice, *Tai toi nous serens entendues!* 'Hush! we shall be overheard and discovered.' Thus cautioned, the sentry retired without farther altercation.'

When the troops were landed, the boats were sent back

for the other division of the troops, which was under the command of Brigadier-general Townshend. The ascent to the heights was by a narrow path, that slanted up the precipice from the landing-place: this path the enemy had broken up, and rendered almost impassable, by cross ditches, and they had made an intrenchment at the top of the hill. Notwithstanding these difficulties, Colonel Howe, who was the first to land, ascended the woody precipices, with the light infantry and the Highlanders, and dislodged a captain's guard which defended the narrow path. They then mounted without further molestation; and General Wolfe, who was among the first to gain the summit of the hill, formed the troops on the heights as they arrived. In the ascent the precipice was found to be so steep and dangerous, that the troops were obliged to climb up the rugged projections of the rocks, and, by aid of the branches of the trees and shrubs growing on both sides of the path, to pull themselves up. Though much time was thus necessarily occupied in the ascent, yet such was the perseverance of the troops, that they all gained the summit in time to enable the general to form in order of battle before day-break.

M. de Montcalm had now no way left of saving Quebec but by risking a battle, and he therefore determined to leave his stronghold and meet the British in the open field. Leaving his camp at Montmorency, he crossed the river St Charles, and, forming his line with great skill, advanced forward to attack his opponents. His right was composed of half the provincial troops, two battalions of regulars, and a body of Canadians and Indians; his centre, of a column of two battalions of Europeans, with two field-pieces; and his left of one battalion of regulars, and the remainder of the colonial troops. In his front, among brushwood and corn-fields, fifteen hundred of his best marksmen were posted to gall the British as they approached. The British were drawn up in two lines: the first, consisting of the grenadiers,

15th, 28th, 35th Highlanders, and 58th; the 47th regiment formed the second line, or reserve. The left of the front line was covered by the light infantry; it appearing to be the intention of the French commander to out-flank the left of the British, Brigadier-general Townshend, with Amherst's regiment, which he formed *en potence*,—thus presenting a double front to the enemy.

The Canadians and the Indians, who were posted among the brushwood, kept up an irregular galling fire, which proved fatal to many officers, who, from their dress, were singled out by these marksmen. The fire of this body was, in some measure, checked by the advanced posts of the British, who returned the fire; and a small gun, which was dragged up by the seamen from the landing-place, was brought forward, and did considerable execution. The French now advanced to the charge with great spirit, firing as they advanced; but, in consequence of orders they received, the British troops reserved their fire till the main body of the enemy had approached within forty yards of their line. When the enemy had come within that distance, the whole British line poured in a general and destructive discharge of musketry. Another discharge followed, which had such an effect upon the enemy, that they stopped short, and after making an ineffectual attempt upon the left of the British line, they began to give way. At this time General Wolfe, who had received two wounds which he had concealed, was mortally wounded whilst advancing at the head of the grenadiers with fixed bayonets.

At this instant every separate corps of the British army exerted itself, as if the contest were for its own peculiar honour. Whilst the right pressed on with their bayonets, Brigadier-general Murray briskly advanced with the troops under his command, and soon broke the centre of the enemy, "when the Highlanders, taking to their broadswords, fell in among them with irresistible impetuosity, and

drove them back with great slaughter." The action on the left of the British was not so warm. A smart contest, however, took place between part of the enemy's right and some light infantry, who had thrown themselves into houses, which they defended with great courage. During this attack, Colonel Howe, who had taken post with two companies behind a copse, frequently sallied out on the flanks of the enemy, whilst General Townshend advanced in platoons against their front. Observing the left and centre of the French giving way, this officer, on whom the command had just devolved in consequence of General Monckton, the second in command, having been dangerously wounded, hastened to the centre, and finding that the troops had got into disorder in the pursuit, formed them again in line. At this moment, Monsieur de Bougainville, who had marched from Cape Rouge as soon as he heard that the British troops had gained the heights, appeared in their rear at the head of 2,000 fresh men. General Townshend immediately ordered two regiments, with two pieces of artillery, to advance against this body; but Bougainville retired on their approach. The wreck of the French army retreated to Quebec and Point Levi.

The loss sustained by the enemy was considerable. About 1,000 of them were made prisoners, including a number of officers, and about 500 died on the field of battle. The death of their brave commander, Montcalm, who was mortally wounded almost at the same instant with General Wolfe, was a serious calamity to the French arms. When informed that his wound was mortal,—“So much the better,” said he, “I shall not live to see the surrender of Quebec.” Before his death he wrote a letter to General Townshend, recommending the prisoners to the generous humanity of the British. The death of the two commanders-in-chief, and the disasters which befel Generals Monckton and Severergues, the two seconds in command, who were respectively carried

wounded from the field, are remarkable circumstances in the events of this day. This important victory was not gained without considerable loss on the part of the British, who, besides the commander-in-chief, had 8 officers and 48 men killed; and 43 officers and 435 men wounded. The death of General Wolfe was a national loss. "He inherited from nature an animating fervour of sentiment, an intuitive perception, and extensive capacity, and a passion for glory, which stimulated him to acquire every species of military knowledge that study could comprehend, that actual service could illustrate and confirm. Brave above all estimation of danger, he was also generous, gentle, complacent, and humane;—the pattern of the officer, the darling of the soldier. There was a sublimity in his genius which soared above the pitch of ordinary minds; and had his faculties been exercised to their full extent by opportunity and action, had his judgment been fully matured by age and experience, he would, without doubt, have rivalled in reputation the most celebrated captains of antiquity." When the final ball pierced the breast of the young hero, he found himself unable to stand, and leaned upon the shoulder of a lieutenant who sat down on the ground. This officer, observing the French give way, exclaimed,—“They run! they run!” “Who run?” inquired the gallant Wolfe with great earnestness. When told that it was the French that were flying: “What,” said he, “do the cowards run already? Then I die happy!” and instantly expired.

On the 18th of September the town surrendered, and a great part of the circumjacent country being reduced, General Townshend embarked for England, leaving a garrison of 5,000 effective men in Quebec, under the Hon. General James Murray. Apprehensive of a visit from a considerable French army stationed in Montreal and the neighbouring country, General Murray repaired the fortifications, and put the town in a proper posture of defence; but his troops suf-

ferred so much from the rigours of winter, and the want of vegetables and fresh provisions, that, before the end of April, the garrison was reduced, by death and disease, to about 3,000 effective men. Such was the situation of affairs when the general received certain intelligence that General de Levi, who succeeded the Marquis de Montcalm, had reached Point au Tremble with a force of 10,000 French and Canadians, and 500 Indians. It was the intention of the French commander to cut off the posts which the British had established; but General Murray defeated this scheme, by ordering the bridges over the river Rouge to be broken down, and the landing places at Sylleri and Foulon to be secured. Next day, the 27th of April, he marched in person with a strong detachment and two field-pieces, and took possession of an advantageous position, which he retained till the afternoon, when the outposts were withdrawn, after which he returned to Quebec with very little loss, although the enemy pressed closely on his rear.

General Murray was now reduced to the necessity of withstanding a siege, or risking a battle. He chose the latter alternative, a resolution which was deemed by some military men as savouring more of youthful impatience and overstrained courage, than of judgment; but the dangers with which he was beset, in the midst of a hostile population, and the difficulties incident to a protracted siege, seem to afford some justification for that step. In pursuance of his resolution, the general marched out on the 28th of April, at half-past six o'clock in the morning, and formed his little army on the heights of Abraham. The right wing, commanded by Colonel Burton, consisted of the 15th, 48th, 58th, and second battalion of the 60th, or Royal Americans: the left under Colonel Simon Fraser, was formed of the 43d, 47th Welsh fusileers, and the Highlanders. The 35th, and the third battalion of the 60th, constituted the reserve. The right was covered by Major Dalling's corps of light infantry; and

the left by Captain Huzzen's company of rangers, and 100 volunteers, under the command of Captain Macdonald of Fraser's regiment.

Observing the enemy in full march in one column, General Murray advanced quickly forward to meet them before they should form their line. His light infantry coming in contact with Levi's advance, drove them back on their main body; but pursuing too far, they were furiously attacked and repulsed in their turn. They fell back in such disorder on the line, as to impede their fire, and in passing round by the right flank to the rear, they suffered much from the fire of a party who were endeavouring to turn that flank. The enemy having made two desperate attempts to penetrate the right wing, the 35th regiment was called up from the reserve, to its support. Meanwhile the British left was struggling with the enemy, who succeeded so far, from their superior numbers, in their attempt to turn that flank, that they obtained possession of two redoubts, but were driven out from both by the Highlanders, sword in hand. By pushing forward fresh numbers, however, the enemy at last succeeded in forcing the left wing to retire, the right giving way about the same time. The French did not attempt to pursue, but allowed the British to retire quietly within the walls of the city, and to carry away their wounded. The British had six officers, and 250 rank and file killed; and 82 officers, and 679 non-commissioned officers and privates, wounded. The enemy lost twice the number of men.

Shortly after the British had retired, General Levi moved forward on Quebec, and having taken up a position close to it, opened a fire at five o'clock. He then proceeded to besiege the city in form, and General Murray made the necessary dispositions to defend the place. The siege was continued till the 10th of May, when it was suddenly raised; the enemy retreating with great precipitation, leaving all their artillery implements and stores behind. This unexpected

event was occasioned by the destruction or capture of all the enemy's ships above Quebec, by an English squadron which had arrived in the river, and the advance of General Amherst on Montreal. General Murray left Quebec in pursuit of the enemy, but was unable to overtake them, and he afterwards joined General Amherst, in the neighbourhood of Montreal, and acted a conspicuous part in the capture of that last stronghold of the French in Canada.

Fraser's Highlanders were not called again into active service till the summer of 1762, when they were, on the expedition under Colonel William Amherst, sent to retake St. John's, Newfoundland. In this service Captain Macdonell of Fraser's regiment, was mortally wounded, three rank and file killed, and seven wounded.

At the conclusion of the war, a number of the officers and men having expressed a desire to settle in North America, had their wishes granted and an allowance of land given them. The rest returned to Scotland, and were discharged. When the war of the American revolution broke out, upwards of 300 of those men who had remained in the country, enlisted in the 84th regiment, in 1775, and formed part of two fine battalions embodied under the name of the Royal Highland Emigrants.
